

**THE SENATE
STATE OF MICHIGAN**

34TH DISTRICT
P.O. BOX 30036
LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909-7536
PHONE: (517) 373-1635
TOLL-FREE: (866) 305-2134
FAX: (517) 373-3300
sengvanwoerkom@senate.michigan.gov



GERALD VAN WOERKOM

COMMITTEES:

CHAIRMAN: AGRICULTURE
CHAIRMAN: LOCAL, URBAN AND
STATE AFFAIRS
VICE-CHAIR: EDUCATION
VICE-CHAIR: NATURAL RESOURCES
AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS
TRANSPORTATION
ADMINISTRATIVE RULES

Minutes of the Senate Agriculture and Bio-economy Committee

Thursday, January 29, 2009

9:00 a.m.

Room 110 Farnum Building

- Chairman Van Woerkom called the Committee to order at 9:07 a.m.
- Members Present: Van Woerkom, Gilbert, Birkholz, Gleason and Whitmer
- Chairman Van Woerkom moved to adopt the committee rules for the new session. His motion was approved unanimously.
- Sen. Gilbert moved to adopt the minutes from the previous meeting. His motion was supported by Sen. Whitmer and was approved unanimously.
- Chairman Van Woerkom announced that the committee was changing its name to include the bio-economy because of agriculture's close link to new technologies using natural resources.
- Chairman Van Woerkom explained that the committee was going to discuss the presence of cougars in Michigan. He wanted to determine if they do actually exist in Michigan and the state can do about it.
- Patrick Rusz from the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy testified that there have been multiple sightings of cougars. He has shown DNR photos, scat and tracks but they still deny their existence.

- Wendy Chamberlain, Parma Township Supervisor, testified that she has seen cougars on several occasions over a 30 year period but DNR refused to come out and investigate.
- Robert Sray testified that he submitted pictures to DNR that showed a horse that was attacked by cougars. At first DNR agreed but then changed their mind.
- David Townsend from Forensic Examination Services testified that he was called into to demonstrate the veracity of a video that showed two cougars in Jackson County. He showed the committee portions of the video and told the committee that it was authentic.
- Mike Zuidema, a retired DNR forester, testified that he has seen a cougar. He also has several hundred anecdotal reports of cougars being spotted by trappers in the UP.
- Robert Vandenberg from Cougars on the Farm testified that he first saw a cougar in 1986 and has seen them several times since. He suggested that he has been ridiculed by those who don't believe cougars are present in Michigan.
- Dave Haywood from the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy testified on what the law requires DNR to do. He called for them to do an investigation to determine if cougars exist in Michigan.
- Dennis Fijalkowsky from the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy turned in a card to testify but deferred his time to other presenters.
- Chairman Van Woerkom adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m.